

Ned Balbo

The Ex-Friends

The ex-friends like you still, but they're wary,
when chance meetings force them to extend
the courtesy they'd once have given freely.

At first, you thought their distance temporary—
time away to find themselves, or mend.
The ex-friends like you still, but they're weary,

faced with deadlines, obligations daily
undertaken, though they still intend,
they say, with courtesy once given freely,

to call you back, though it's unnecessary—
painful, even—since you “understand”:
the ex-friends you still like are feeling wary,

wondering if they've fooled you—fooled you *really*?
So much work is needed to pretend
the courtesy they'd once have given freely,

so you part ways, thoughtful, solitary—
What thoughtless word, long past, had marked the end?
The ex-friends, like you, still are feeling wary
but relieved...They smiled. You set them free.